



Biopsychosocial Health Education Dynamics of Rape Perpetration: A Rape Prevention Dynamics

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Abstract

Rape perpetration is a public health concern and most cases of rape are less reported possibly because of shame, fear of attack or poorly enforced legal action. Series of attempts to curb and reduce the cases of rape especially in Nigeria involved some measures of incarceration and social supports. Traditional methods of treating individual with healthcare needs that foster wellbeing was basically a physician biomedical approach. Overtime, health was viewed as a holistic concept incorporating not only biological domain and causes of illness but also other dimensions including psychological and social. Therefore, a more comprehensive and holistic approach incorporating the biological, psychological and social determinants of individual's health and wellbeing evolved. Such an approach is more encompassing in health education and disease prevention. Hence, the biopsychosocial health education dynamics of rape perpetration becomes a veritable tool for explaining the drives behind rape perpetration of sexually active males. Therefore, a number of theories including the biological theory, Rape Theory and the Social Learning Theory were used to explain the biological, psychological and social health education dynamics of rape perpetration. Finally, the Psychoanalytic Theory of Sigmund Freud and Ellis's Biosocial Theory were used to provide explanations for the biopsychosocial health education dynamics of rape perpetration with particular focus on the dynamics of prevention of the behaviour.

Keywords: Biopsychosocial; Health Education; Dynamics; Rape Perpetration; Prevention.



Introduction

Rape perpetration is a public health issue contributing to morbidity and mortality in contemporary times. Different cases of rape take the forms of incestual, child, marital, date, gang, prison, acquaintance, war, minor (statutory) rape. According to Women at Risk International Foundation (WARIF, 2025) the prevalence of child sexual rape in Africa is 34.4%.

In Nigeria specifically in Adamawa State, most cases of rape perpetration represented with 97.8% is commonly found among the 18-33 years old men, and most women (95.0%) are victims majorly less than 18 years (Babajide, 2025). The possible effects of rape perpetration on the victim can vary between individuals. According to Alao (2018) the impacts of rape on victim and society include flashbacks, dissociation, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), self-harm, pregnancy, post-traumatic stress disorder. The psychological effects of rape include social withdrawal, shame, fear, low self-esteem, suicide tendency, emotional instability; personal, social and professional life (Reshma et al. Pillai, Rajeevi, Sreekutty, Eslavath, George & Greeshma, 2022). From the above effects, it is clear that the perpetration of rape has adverse effects on the health and well-being of the victim sometimes affecting their trust for others and confidence in themselves.

Rape perpetration is common but the number of reported cases is sometimes low possibly because of the shame or stigma associated with the behaviour and the handling of the perpetrators with felony. Women are most vulnerable to rape and most often the measures claimed to be used against their perpetrators differ by social-cultural and political sentiments. Evidences exist concerning the reduction of occurrence of rape perpetration in terms of social measures such as employment of men so as to reduce hardship and alcohol intake, legal measures, sex education involving respect, education on consent, awareness campaign, and community vigilance as well as social support for victims (Maweu, 2022; Omosehin, 2023; Bhattacharya & Singh, 2024). Apart from the social measures aimed at rape reduction, Maweu, (2022) and Omosehin, 2023 noted that psychosocial control of rape involving comprehensive involvement of parents, religious institutions, governmental, non-governmental and civil society agencies and improved law service have also been harnessed. Furthermore, there is also The Child Rights Law Odeh (2013), and life imprisonment of rape perpetrators under section 358 of the Criminal Code of the Federal Government of Nigeria.

Despite the aforementioned measures to prevent and control rape perpetration, 86% females still present for sexual assault in health facility with 0.9 % of perpetrators being documented for trial with almost none convicted in Nigeria [United Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2022)]. This assertion means that rape perpetrators are hardly convicted. As a way of controlling the menace of rape, a number of efforts were directed at providing explanations for the cause of rape in terms of the socio-cultural milieu, poor tackling of rape cases and crude legal enforcement against rapists in Nigeria (Ellis, 1991; Alao, 2018; Maweu, 2022; Reshma et al. 2022; Omosehin, 2023). Apart from these, none to the understanding of the researcher is directed at explaining the complex multidimensional dynamics responsible for the occurrence of rape perpetration in society. The present paper, therefore attempted to close this gap by explaining the holistic biopsychosocial health education dynamics of rape perpetration with particular focus on the dynamics of prevention of the behaviour. This is the rationale for the present paper. Where applicable, theories were used to drive home the explanation. Note that the explanations of the sub-heads are not mutually exclusive based on interaction of all the dimensions depicted in Figure 1. The paper is focused on examining the following sub-heads:

- Conceptual Framework of Biopsychosocial Health Education Dynamics of Rape Perpetration;
- Biological Health Education Dynamics of Rape;
- Psychological Health Education Dynamics of Rape;
- Social Health Education Dynamics of Rape;
- Biosocial Health Education Dynamics of Rape;
- Psychosocial Health Education Dynamics of Rape;
- Biopsychological Health Education Dynamics of Rape;
- Biopsychosocial Health Education Dynamics of Rape Perpetration: A Rape Prevention Perspective; and
- Recommendations.

Conceptual Framework of Biopsychosocial Health Education Dynamics of Rape Perpetration

The conceptual framework advanced in Fig. 1, brings to understanding the interactive influence of the concepts of biological, psychological and social dynamics which are the main drives of an individual's rape perpetration. The subsets of the biological and psychological drives is psychobiological dynamics, and that between the biological and social is the biosocial dynamics. In addition, the subset of the psychological and social drives is the psychosocial dynamics. The interactions between the sub-drives of psychobiological dynamics and biosocial dynamics as well as psychosocial dynamics is possible rape perpetration. Finally, the occurrence of rape perpetration is the intersection of the proximal and distal interactive influences among the main and sub-drives.

Definition of Concepts

Biological Dynamics: Physical and physiological factors as main drives in the explanation of rape perpetration. Examples include copulation, and estrogen.

Psychological Dynamics: Thought process and behaviours as main drives prompting rape perpetration. Sexual motivation, sexual interest, hatred, distress, sadness, anger, frustrations, poor emotional control, sexual attraction, anxiety are some examples of psychological dynamics.

Social Dynamics: Interpersonal relationships acting as main drives for the occurrence of rape perpetration. Examples of social dynamics are provocative dressing, substance abuse, poor parenting, misuse of power, dominance, poverty, marginalization, control, possession, learning, copying.

Psychobiological Dynamics: Physical/physiological make up and thought process/behaviour acting as sub-drives fostering rape perpetration of an individual. Example includes aggression or hatred triggering the release of sex hormone.

Psychosocial Dynamics: Thought process/behaviour and the interpersonal relationships acting as sub-drives for an individual rape perpetration. The conscious and unconscious mind, stimulation, sexual satisfaction, and sexual misconceptions are some examples of psychosocial dynamics.

Biosocial Dynamics: Physical/physiological makeup and interpersonal relationships acting as sub-drives for rape perpetration. Examples include sex drive, gender difference, gender roles, and age-linked sex drive.

Rape Perpetration: the intersection of the interactive influence among the main drives (biological, psychological and social dynamics) and sub-drives (biopsychosocial, psychosocial and biosocial dynamics).

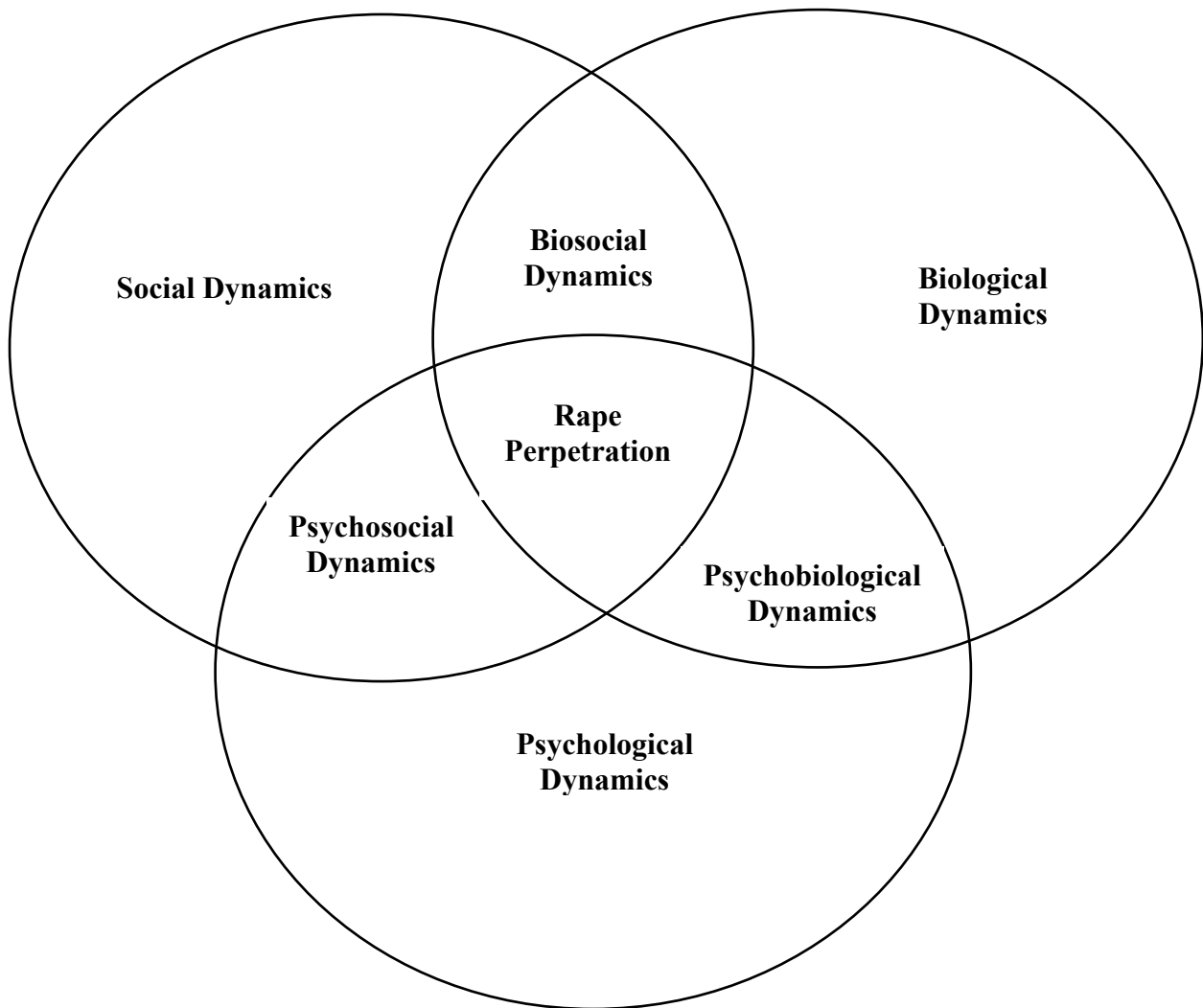


Fig. 1: Biopsychosocial Health Education Dynamics of Rape Perpetration

Biological Health Education Dynamics of Rape

Biological reasons can be used to explain the possibilities of the occurrence of rape perpetration. Ellis Evolutionary (biological) theory (1991) of the natural process of selection and copulation act as pressure of men to be assertive in having many sexual partners and this nature can be vice versa when the female folk resist such pressure from the men. Man is a biological being with physiological makeup. The reproductive predisposition of males can be likened to a 'he-goat' when under heat can hardly control his urge. The male sex hormone (estrogen) can foster an urge which can sometimes have consequence in rape perpetration. The consequence of indulging in rape perpetration without control can hardly prevent disease especially a perpetration carried out without an STI-prevention barrier. For instance, if there is

a provocative dressing, estrogen could be triggered to respond in a negative way towards forceful sexual intercourse.

Psychological Health Education Dynamics of Rape

Psychological health education theories can be used to explain the thought process of man and his behaviour through many mechanisms. Many multi factor psychological theories exist with the Malamuth (1996) rape theory being more popular. In it, sociocultural feminist and evolutionary ideas are combined with important psychological themes to provide explanation of men's drive toward rape. The 'why' and 'how' rape occurs can be understood. The 'why' idea of men's propensity to rape is determined by an evolutionary factor to desire sexual activity most possibly occasioned by coercion. For the 'how', a combination of risk factors can prompt the motivation and provision of the occasion of rape. For example, the show of power and dominance is psychologically dysfunctional.

Dysfunctional thought can influence unfavourable attitudes which cause pain and punishment especially when such action is an avenge. Similarly, in aggression, angry male mobs could invade females especially in war rape. According to Reshma et al. (2022), sexual frustrations, unmet need, poor emotional control, and dysfunctional attraction toward women, and psychological deviations and childhood trauma are foundation for rape perpetration. Appropriate psychological health can hardly be directed at discharging anger, inflicting pain or gaining control over others.

Social Health Education Dynamics of Rape

Social inclinations of rape perpetration can be clearly understood with interpersonal behavioural or social theories. One such theory is the Social Learning Theory propounded by Albert Bandura (1971), stating that learning can occur through cognitive processing of information from a social setting either by observation or instruction. By observation, possibilities are rape perpetration in a social setting favourable in the midst of social vices. Social-cultural events could create a threat of rape putting potential victims in perpetual anxiety and restrictions. In war rape, for example, Reshma et al. (2022), noted that a number of socio-cultural events play roles in the initiation and sustenance of unfavourable attitudes, misconceptions and standardization of rape against women. In addition, lack of awareness, misperception about needs and desires of women, and attitude towards women and relationship, provocative dressing, substance abuse, poor parenting, misuse of power by religious institutions, and definition of attitudes sometime culminate into rape perpetration (Reshma et al. 2022). These social prompters are offenses varying in motives, degree and type. Malizia (2024) called a sex offending as guilt of offenses relating to sexual activity and varies in extent, manner and motives.

Another theory of relevance in this context is the Theory of Gender and Power propounded by Conell (1987). It states that the vulnerability of women to rape is occasioned by cultural norms and gender difference. Gender in terms of division of labour, roles and assignments in which men dominate women leading to marginalization, powerlessness and poverty exist (Omosehin, 2023). Social-cultural milieu favouring men to dominate and take on social roles in employment and decision-making affairs are impediments to social health. In the thoughts of Abdullatif, Kivanguli and Wamalwa (2018), unemployment and drug abuse are also commonplace among people.

Biosocial Health Education Dynamics of Rape

Biological and social dynamics underpin rape perpetration. According to the Biosocial Theory of Ellis (1991), the biology of rape stems from four assumptions: (1) the motivation of rape is influenced by two drives (sex drive and drive to control and possess), (2) the sex drive inherent in men is more than that possessed by women based on nature, (3) the motive to rape is somewhat unlearned, rape is learned with the form of learning being experience instead of copying and attitudes, and (4) differences in the influence of male type of sex hormone on the brain give room to variations in sex drive and their reaction to punishment and the pain of others.

From the assumptions above, the concepts of gender and age, can be understood. First, the urge for rape comes from the sex drive of a man that is reproductively mature to procreate. Basically, at adolescence, the drive for sex of a man makes him want to have control over the female. Second, a woman is less well-stronger than the man based on nature and hence is dominated and possessed by sex drive of the man. Third, by experience gained overtime from series of sexual activities, a man is capable of raping a woman. In addition, a male virgin will possibly not begin copulation with rape. Finally, the influence of male sex hormone on the brain determines his sex drive and the degree to coping with punishment.

Psychosocial Health Education Dynamics of Rape

Psychosocial explanation in terms of rape perpetration is paramount to understand. The Psychoanalytic Theory of Sigmund Freud which is based on the assumption that the mind has two parts, the conscious and unconscious with an individual's personality falling into three parts, the id, ego and superego (Cherry, 2024). The id is basically responsible for many urges occurring in the unconscious mind and primitively satisfies the libido. The ego is realistic and tries to bring the demands of the id to satisfaction in ways that are safe and normative. The superego protects internal morals and principles acquired from social others.

The tenets of Freud can be likened to a rape perpetration. The conscious and unconscious minds which are mainly awareness as well as stimulus, urge and thoughts can control an individual's behaviour (that is, rape perpetration). The id potential pushes man to want to satisfy the 'self' by gratifying emotional feeling of sexual satisfaction. Such satisfaction can amount to pain and distress to the victim of rape. A rape perpetration in which the motives of sadness, aggression and sexual-drive are paramount, is the resultant effect (Abdullatif, Kivanguli & Wamalwa, 2018). The cumulative influence of sexual misconceptions, interpersonal relationships, poverty, and war could act as psychosocial tendencies to facilitate the occurrence of rape. Incorrect ideas and opinions handed down from generation, for example, can make the sexually mature male child to sexually dominate the girl child. Another instance of poverty, can possibly make the sexually mature male child to forcefully advance against the female without her consent.

Psychobiological Health Education Dynamics of Rape

Psychobiological health education dynamics is the union of psychological and biological dynamics of rape perpetration. A man's aggressiveness, hatred, anger, and/or pain could trigger the release of sex hormone to influence the brain into sexual action. Consequently, the psychological and neurobiological basis of a single rape perpetration encounter can be likened to long-term abuse in relation to subsequent psychopathology and HPA-axis functioning (Bicanic, 2014). Psychopathological health conditions are obvious possibilities.

Biopsychosocial Health Education Dynamics of Rape Perpetration: A Rape Prevention Perspective

Conventional attention of individual healthcare needs and wellbeing was a physician biomedical approach while the psychologist examined the mental health basis of the individual. With time, a more comprehensive and holistic approach evolved to incorporate the social determinants in an interaction with an individual's health and wellbeing. Though complex, such an approach is more encompassing in health education and disease prevention. Hence, biopsychosocial health education dynamics through rape perpetration avoidance in preventive messages and health advocacy becomes a veritable tool for all sexually active males. A prior definition or meaning of the concepts and constructs embedded in 'biopsychosocial health education dynamics of rape perpetration' is required before its own definition.

The concept of biopsychosocial is used in a model to represent the interplay of biological, psychological and social domains in explaining health, disease and wellbeing. The biopsychosocial model was designed by Geroge Engel and John Romano in the 1970s (Marshall, 2023). The biological, psychological and social determinants of health, disease and wellbeing are particularly core in biopsychosocial discuss. According to Collins Dictionary, dynamics is the study of the movement and the cause of the movement of objects. In this context therefore, dynamics is the explanation of the possible causes of rape perpetration of sexually active males. Health education is a systematic way of making people to make worthwhile decisions which can promote health, prevent disease, protect health, and maintain well-being. Rape perpetration is a forced or threatened sexual activity mostly concerned with sexual intercourse initiated by an individual against the will of the victim.

All concepts and constructs put together means that 'biopsychosocial health education dynamics of rape perpetration' is a systematic way of making sexually active males to make worthwhile social and psychological decisions which can promote their sexual health, prevent STIs, protect sexual health and maintain their overall wellbeing. Therefore, the avoidance of rape perpetration is contingent upon the positive influences of the main drives and sub-drives, depicted in Figure 1. This call for an effective prevention approach. The prevention is holistic encompassing intra- and interpersonal drives at health promotion and disease prevention.

This is one rationale for the series of theories mentioned in the subsequent sections to explain rape perpetration. Of the theories, two stand out, which are the Psychoanalytic Theory of Sigmund Freud and Ellis's Biosocial Theory. The researcher used the Psychoanalytic Theory in this preventive perspective to explain the interplay of the dynamics in terms of the mind and the personality of the rape perpetrator. The sex drive and the drive to control and possess are primitive if the desire is to forcefully cause harm and pain to the victim. As primitive as the id, the ego coordinates the perpetration based on knowledge and experiences of the conscious in order to bring the urge of the unconscious mind into reality. The superego mediates the dysfunctional conscious and unconscious minds by bringing the motives of sex drive, urges, thoughts, sex hormone under control. In other words, what you know should not be enough to cause rape perpetration.

Health education in a biopsychosocial discussion, provides the much-needed health education and disease prevention framework with relevance in assuring less cost and input of resources in treatment and management of STIs. Hence, a clarion call for prevention of STIs in dynamic discussion with intra- and interpersonal overview of the framework.



Recommendations

In addition to the place of biopsychosocial health education dynamics of rape perpetration, the following recommendations are proposed as other possible dynamics to prevent rape perpetration among sexually active males in the school and other public settings:

Group Dynamics: Changing the kinds of people an individual has relationship with can foster avoidance of unhealthy and harmful rape perpetration. With this, discussions relating to rape perpetration can be put under control and prevented.

Mind Dynamics: The mind controls individual's attitudes and behaviours. The thought process, instincts and belief systems play crucial roles in shaping behaviour. Therefore, guiding the mind can prevent rape perpetration.

Help Dynamics: When the above explanations are not helpful, an individual can seek help from a biopsychosocial expert. These are the biomedical, psychologist, health counsellors, and counselling psychologists who will use their expertise to uncover medical history, family information, and genetical basis in relation to rape perpetration.



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